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WASHINGTON POST
28 June 1983

1980 Debate 'Papers' Go To Justice

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The White House said yesterday that it has turned over to the Justice Department unspecified "papers" prepared by advisers to President Carter for his 1980 debate with Ronald Reagan. The papers were found in the files of Reagan campaign officials.

While there are "similarities" between these papers and the complete Carter briefing book, White House spokesman Larry Speakes said, senior Reagan aides say they believe they did not receive what former Carter advisers say was Carter's complete briefing book for the debate.

As the controversy generated increasing concern inside the White House, it was announced yesterday morning that President Reagan told Justice Department officials to "pursue their monitoring" of questions about how officials in his 1980 presidential campaign wound up with the Carter papers and to take "prompt legal steps if illegality is indeed found."

In mid-afternoon, Carter's former pollster, Patrick Caddell, delivered to the White House through an aide a copy of what he said was the

complete Carter briefing book for the 1980 debate.

After it was reviewed by top Reagan aides, including chief of staff James A. Baker III, Office of Management and Budget Director David A. Stockman and White House communications director David R. Gergen, the White House issued a statement last night, saying:

"In their view, their initial examination suggests that, while some of the policy issue briefing material has similarities to what they recall having seen during the campaign, it appears to be a more finished, more sensitive briefing book than they recall.

"Further, the Carter briefing book includes strategic and tactical information that they specifically do not recall having seen: more focused debating points, recommended 'key lines' and 'first-hand accounts,' 'questions to ask,' in rebuttal, recommended 'challenges,' etc."

The statement added the revelation that "independently, the White House counsel's office has also received papers which have been retrieved from certain Reagan campaign officials' files. This material has been forwarded to Justice."

The White House statement did not describe these papers further and said nothing about how they came into the possession of Reagan campaign officials.

Baker, in a letter of explanation to a House subcommittee studying the matter, had said that he was given the documents during the 1980 campaign by William J. Casey, who was Reagan's campaign chairman and is now the director of the CIA.

Yesterday's White House statement said that Casey "has not yet had an opportunity to review the material."

But it was learned that Baker had discussed the matter with Casey at a meeting Sunday.

That followed a Saturday meeting of several top Reagan aides with White House deputy counsel Richard A. Hauser about the Carter briefing book controversy.

Speakes said the meeting was "to get together and get their recollections together on the matter."

Casey has repeatedly said, according to

administration sources, that he does not remember ever seeing the Carter briefing material.

"We don't know where the material came from and how it got to the campaign," another administration official said. "The trail ends with Casey. He says he has no recollection."

Reagan, while saying last week that he considers the matter "much ado about nothing," added that he wants to "get at the bottom" of the controversy.

Speakes said the office of White House counsel Fred F. Fielding yesterday gave the Justice Department some instructions from the president.

"Consistent with its responsibilities, the Department of Justice is monitoring the development of information with respect to the allegations concerning certain briefing materials that the 1980 Reagan campaign organization may have received from the Carter campaign or Carter administration," Speakes said.

"Now the president's instructions: the president has asked the Justice Department to assure that this monitoring is pursued

vigorously and that, if evidence of illegality is produced, appropriate further action be taken promptly. He has asked that anyone with information related to the allegations provide such information to the Justice Department immediately," he said.

Reagan advisers Baker, Gergen and Stockman have said that at the time the Reagan campaign came into possession of the Carter briefing papers they did not think the papers were of great help or significance in preparing Reagan for the debate.

Former Carter advisers strongly disagree. They contend that because Reagan knew Carter's planned line of attack on each issue he could avoid the sort of gaffe that could have been made if he were truly caught off guard.

That, they say, might have been crucial because the debate was a pivotal event in what had been a very close election race.

At a news conference yesterday, Democratic National Committee Chairman Charles T. Manatt called for appointment of a special prosecutor to probe the matter.

But a spokesman for Manatt said the chairman would not formally make the re-

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quest to the Justice Department, because he felt it would not be appropriate for him to do so.

Rep. Donald J. Albosta (D-Mich.), chairman of the House Post Office and Civil Service subcommittee on human resources, scheduled a news conference Wednesday to disclose his panel's plans to pursue the investigation into what the Reagan campaign received and how.

A source close to Albosta said he wants to have a full investigation to determine whether any violation of law was involved.

Yesterday top White House officials convened what they called an "issues luncheon" to help Reagan prepare for tonight's scheduled nationally televised news conference.

Speakes said the matter of the Carter briefing documents was not mentioned at the luncheon.

Informed sources said that senior advisers had decided in advance not to mention the issue to the president and that Reagan did not ask about it during the course of the luncheon.